



2014 Comprehensive Master Plan

Park District of Oak Park

Adopted December 18, 2014

Community Context

Regional Context

A key component in understanding the current state of the Park District and its role in the next ten years is to place it in the context of the region and the Village.

Regionally, the Park District is unique. It serves the Village of Oak Park community, with boundaries that are the same as the municipal boundaries. The neighboring communities all have significantly different characters and demographics:

- The City of Chicago occupies all of the north and east borders of Oak Park. The demographics are markedly different from Oak Park’s in both race/ethnicity and income. Where the Oak Park population along the border is very diverse, the Chicago population is predominantly African-American. The median household income is \$20,000 to \$40,000 less than in the immediately adjacent areas in Oak Park.
- The Town of Cicero and the City of Berwyn occupy the south border of Oak Park. Again, there is a noticeable difference in demographics. Both Cicero and Berwyn have a significant Hispanic population that is not paralleled in Oak Park. Again, the median household income is about \$20,000 to \$40,000 less than in the immediately adjacent areas in Oak Park.
- The Villages of Forest Park and River Forest occupy the west border of Oak Park. The demographics in these communities are more comparable to Oak Park, with similar levels of diversity and comparable median incomes. However, River Forest and the northeast portions of Oak Park have the highest median incomes in the region.
- The racial distribution is relatively consistent throughout the community. Several areas, including the east and west Village boundaries, between Madison and Washington Streets and between Lake Street and the railroad, where there are larger black populations (Figure 3.19).

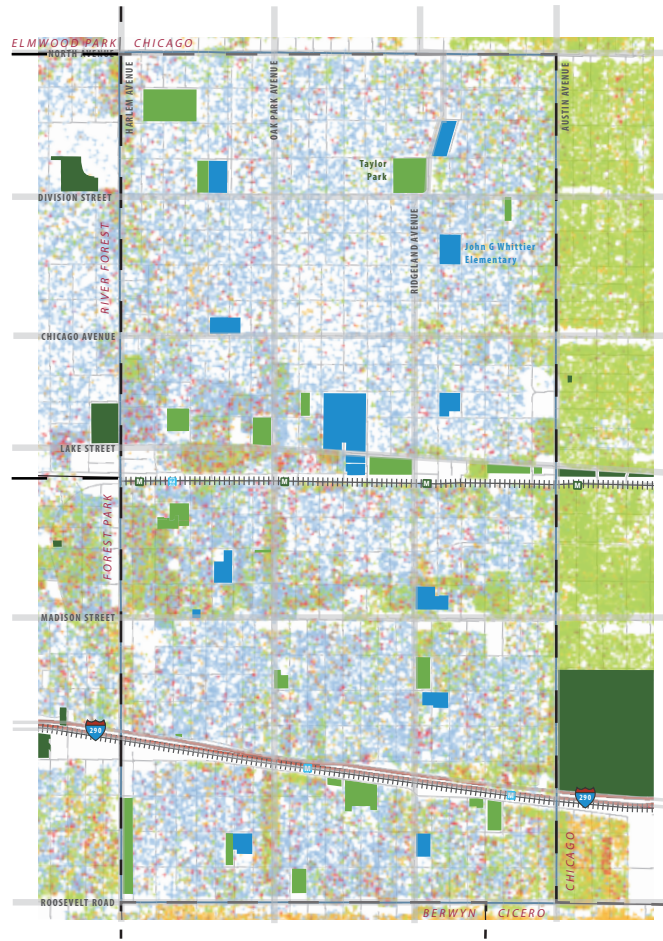
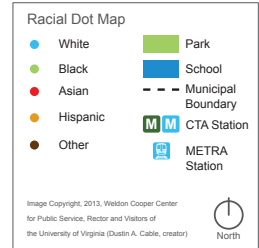


Figure 3.19 - Racial Dot Map

Each dot on the map represents one person



- As shown in Figure 3.20, the median age is higher in the northern and western portions of the community. These are also the areas in the community with higher incomes.

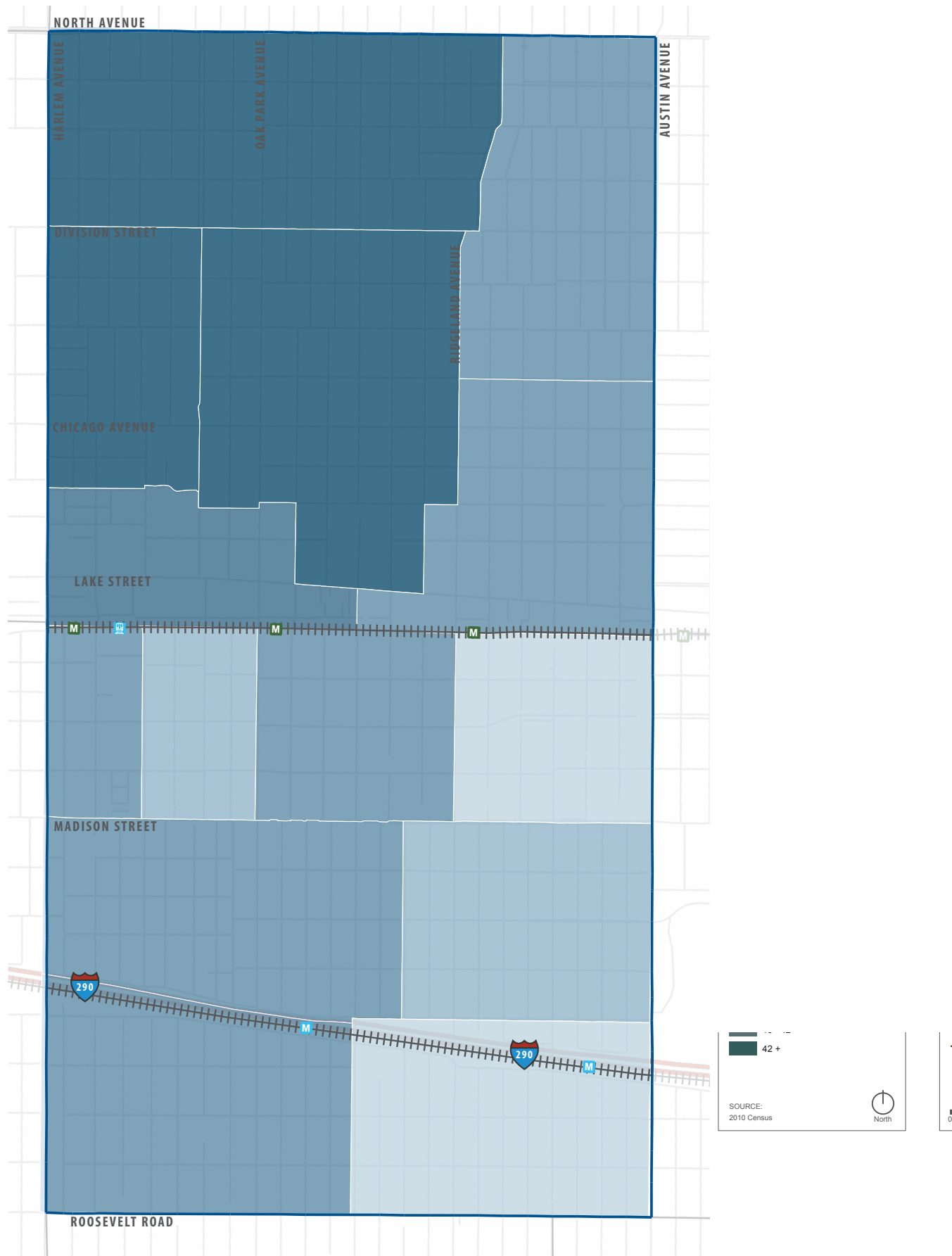


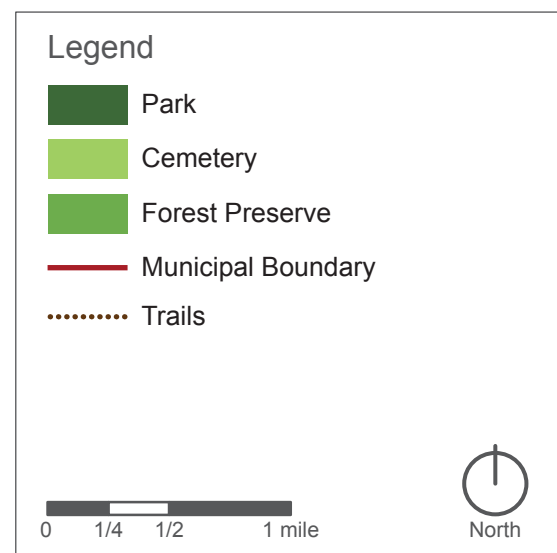
Figure 3.20 - Median Age

Some of the largest open spaces in the region are found outside the Village boundaries (Figure 3.21).

- Columbus Park is located immediately adjacent to the eastern border of the Village, within the City of Chicago. This park is approximately 135 acres and includes an 9 hole public golf course and 6 tennis courts, 3 basketball courts, newly renovated synthetic football and baseball fields, a swimming pool, a playground and a trail system.
- The Des Plaines River runs north/south about one mile west of the Oak Park border. Along the River there are significant Cook County Forest Preserve District lands, as well as other open spaces. One of the key elements is the Hal Tyrrell Trailside Museum within the Thatcher Woods portion of the Forest Preserve. The museum features educational exhibits, live native animals and a wildflower garden.
- The Forest Preserve District of Cook County is planning improvements to the Miller Meadows site located along the Des Plaines River, adjacent to Maywood, Forest Park and North Riverside. These improvements include an approximately 7 acre fenced-in dog park, athletic fields, disc golf and canoe launch.

Additionally, the Village is connected to or proximate to several major bike trail networks.

- The Grand Illinois Trail passes east/west through Oak Park, where it runs as an on-street bike path on Augusta Boulevard. This approximately 500 mile trail creates a loop that connects the Lake Michigan shores of Chicago to the Mississippi River at the Quad Cities, north to Galena, Illinois and back to Chicago.
- The Illinois Prairie Path, a 61 mile rails-to-trails path, begins just west of the Village, within Forest Park, close to the end of the CTA Blue Line and connects to several western suburbs.



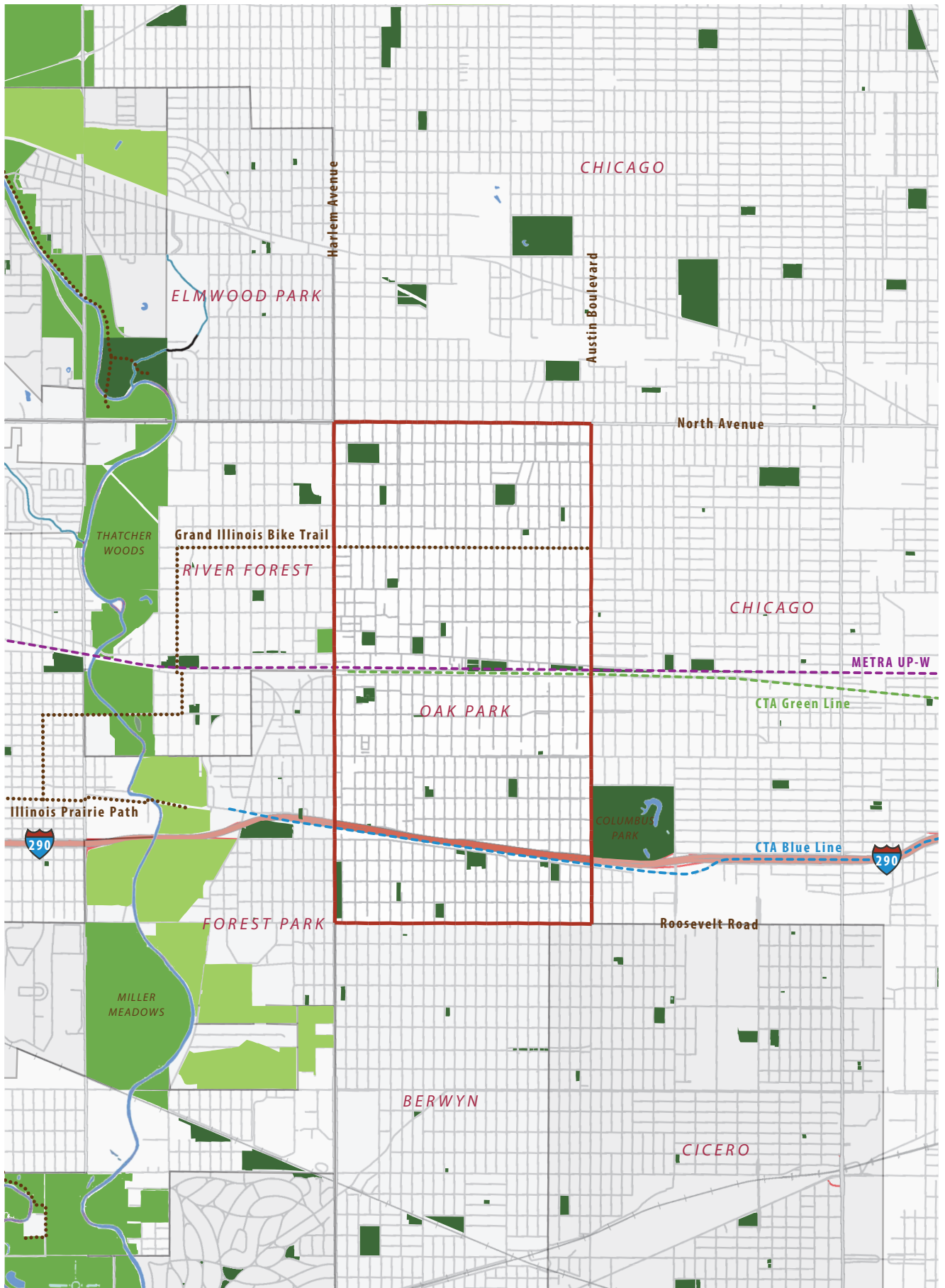


Figure 3.21 -Regional Context

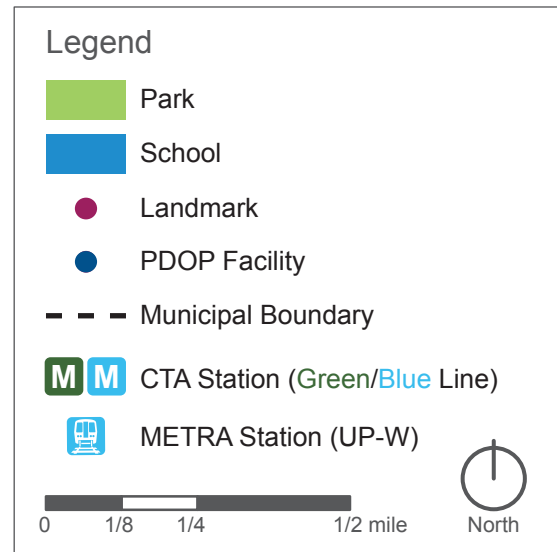
Village Context

At the Village level, there several factors that can be analyzed to help provide a context to how the Park District, its holdings and operations interact with the community. These include factors like location of cultural amenities, land use, and roadways (Figure 3.22).

Cultural Amenities

The parks, along with the local schools, the libraries and other institutions and cultural amenities are spread out throughout the community. While there is a clustering of these elements along Lake Street throughout the Village, there is a relatively balanced distribution of these features in the community.

This distribution provides easy, walkable access for most residents to some type of open space or civic amenity.



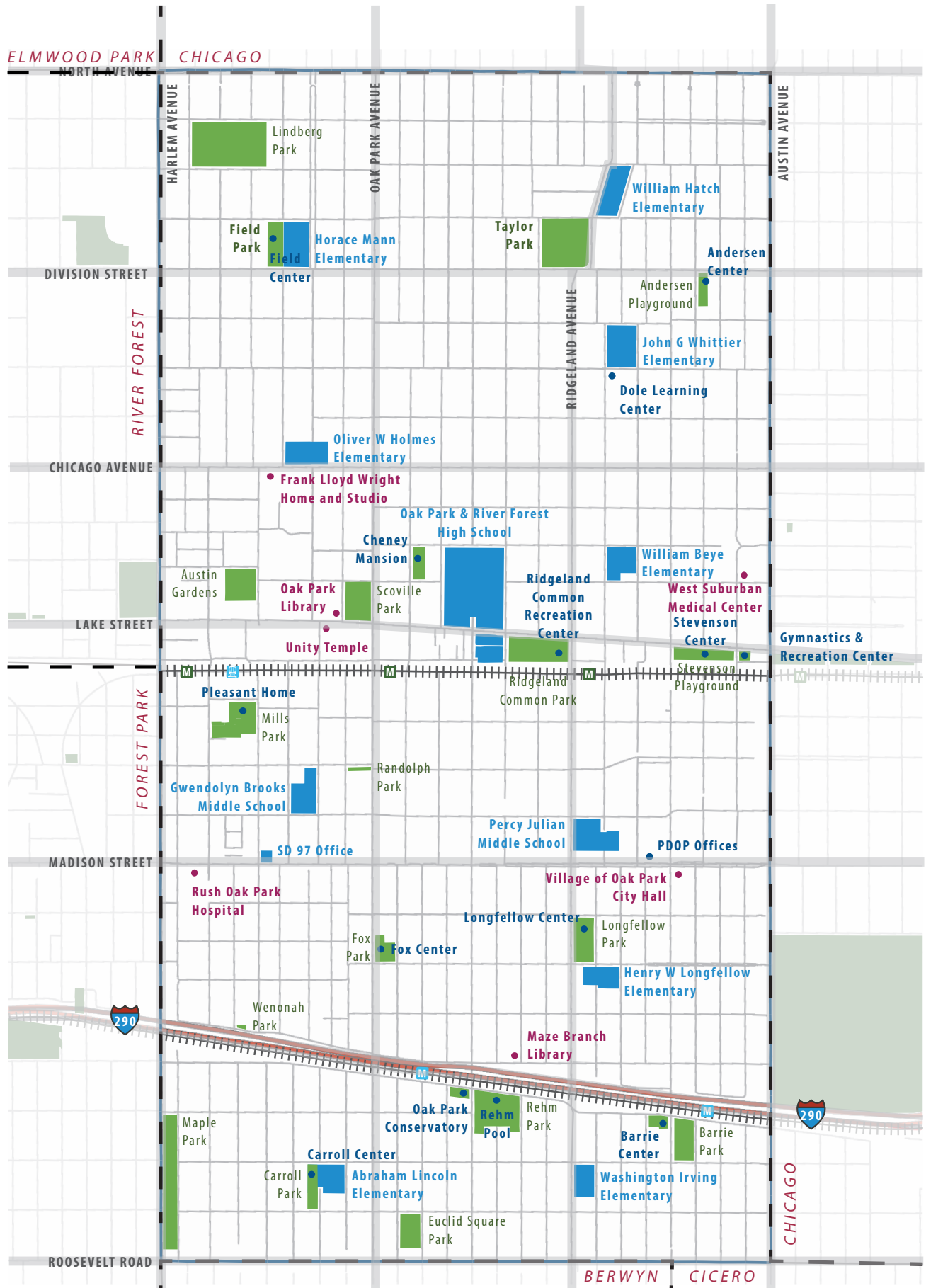


Figure 3.22 -Village Context

Zoning and Land Use

The zoning for the Village helps to create a clear picture of the general land use patterns of Oak Park based upon the ordinances that are in place (Figure 3.23). The majority of the Village is residential zoning of various densities.

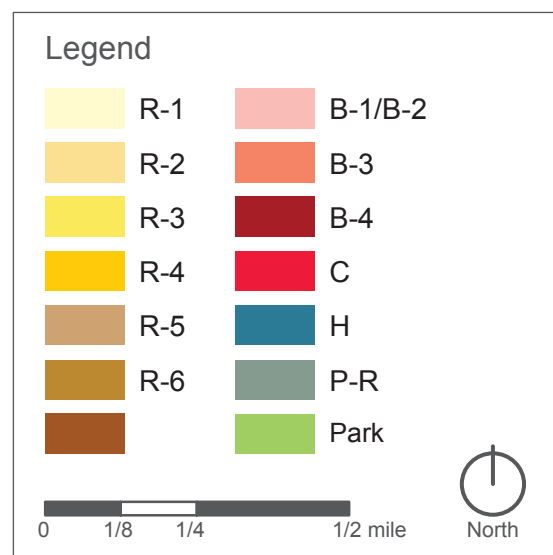
- The lowest density, largest home lots are generally located in the R-1 zoning district which just east of Oak Park Avenue, to the north and south of Chicago Avenue. Along with the R-2 zoning located to the north and west, these areas have the highest median annual incomes in the Village.
- R-3 and R-4 zoning are the most predominant residential areas in Oak Park, found in several areas in the Village. In the northeast portion of the Village, they are located in an area approximately bounded by North Avenue, Austin Boulevard, Chicago Avenue and Ridgeland Avenue. In the central of the Village, they are in the area approximately bounded by South Boulevard, Austin Avenue, Washington Boulevard and Oak Park Avenue. In the southern portion of the Village, they are in the area approximately bounded by Madison Street, Austin Boulevard, Roosevelt Road and Harlem Avenue
- Denser residential areas, which include multi-unit buildings, apartments and condominiums are found proximate to the Downtown in the area bounded by Chicago Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, Madison Street and Harlem Avenue. They are also located between Washington Boulevard and Madison Street for the width of the Village, and along Austin Boulevard
- All of the parks and schools within the Village fall within residential zoning districts.

- Commercial uses are generally located along the major roadways in the Village, including North Avenue, Austin Boulevard, Roosevelt Road, Harlem Avenue, Madison Street, Lake Street and Chicago Avenue.
- The Hospital zoning district is used for the two hospital campuses: Rush Oak Park Hospital near the Harlem Avenue and Madison Street intersection and West Suburban Hospital along Austin Boulevard north of Lake Street.

Vacant Sites

There are very few vacant sites within the Village and their status is subject to change. However, they are important to note as they may offer opportunities for the development of additional open spaces or facilities for the Park District. At the time of this report, the notable vacant sites are:

- The northeast corner of Madison Street and Oak Park Avenue
- The site bounded approximately by the Eisenhower Expressway, Home Avenue, Garfield Boulevard and the Post Office property.



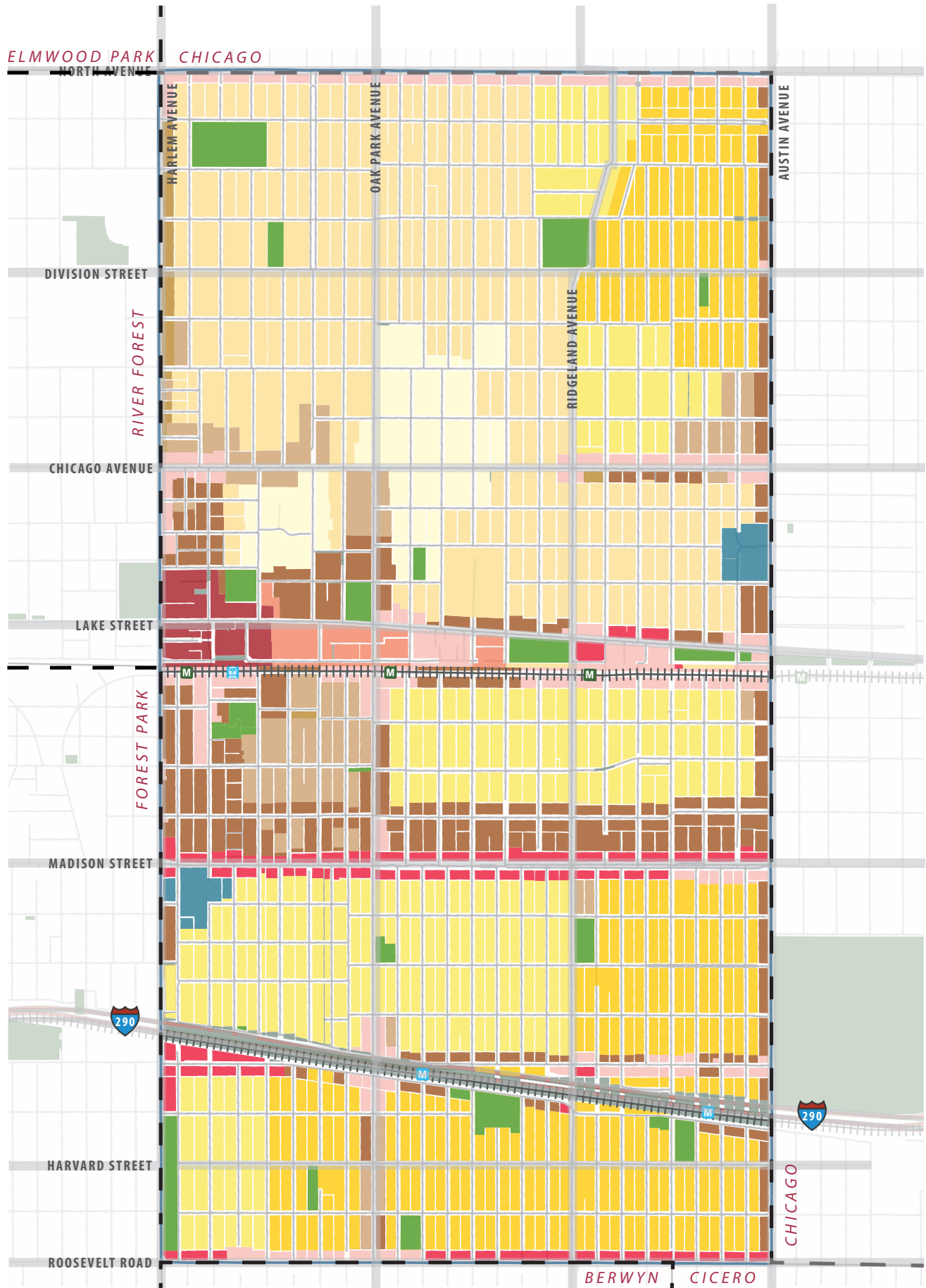


Figure 3.23-Village Zoning

Transportation Network

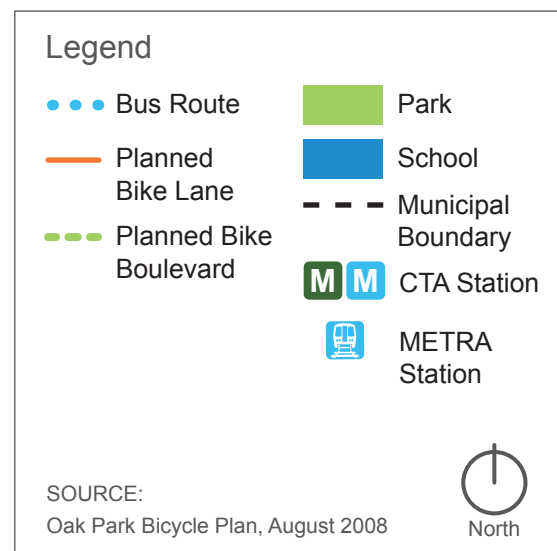
Oak Park benefits from a well-established grid network. Major roads are spaced approximately every 1/2 mile apart in both east/west and north/south directions (Figure 3.24). These larger roads carry more vehicles, are generally controlled through signalized intersections and have the potential to act as barriers to walking and biking within the Village.

Most of these larger roads serve as the routes for local bus lines, including Harlem Avenue, Oak Park Avenue, Ridgeland Avenue, Austin Boulevard, North Avenue, Lake Street, Madison Street and Roosevelt Road. These bus lines, in addition to the CTA Green Line and Blue Line trains and the Metra Union Pacific West train, make up a robust public transit network within the Village that connects to downtown Chicago and communities within the region.

The Village of Oak Park has indicated a commitment to alternative forms of transportation, and developed the Oak Park Bicycle Plan in 2008. This document provides the plan for building a network of bicycle facilities to make it safer and easier to bike within the community. The Plan identifies a network of “Shared Lanes,” “Bike Lanes” and “Bike Boulevards”

along the local roads. This network connects to all but two of the District’s parks or facilities. If established, this network could further encourage residents to access the parks by bicycle. The Village has been working to implement the plan and has pursued grant opportunities to help put it in place.

As most of the Park District’s parks do not have dedicated automobile parking, the ability to access them through other modes of transit is important. Future improvements should continue to provide supporting amenities, including more bicycle parking, with consideration for more covered parking such as at Ridgeland Common, and integration with bus stops – such as benches provided at key stops. Additionally, the Park District should work closely with the Village on future multi-modal improvements within the Community to ensure they connect and relate to the District’s parks and facilities.



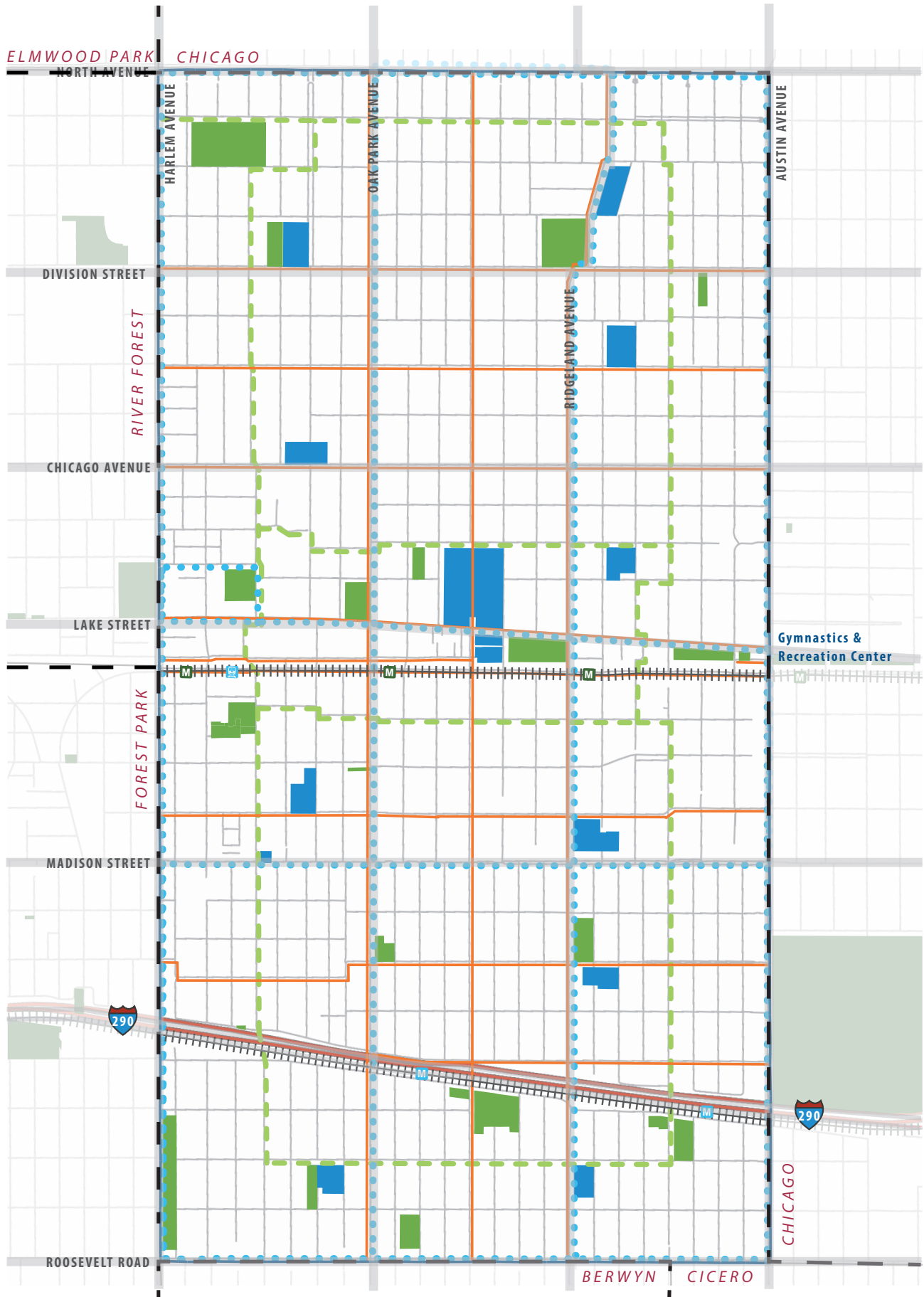


Figure 3.24 -Village Transportation Network

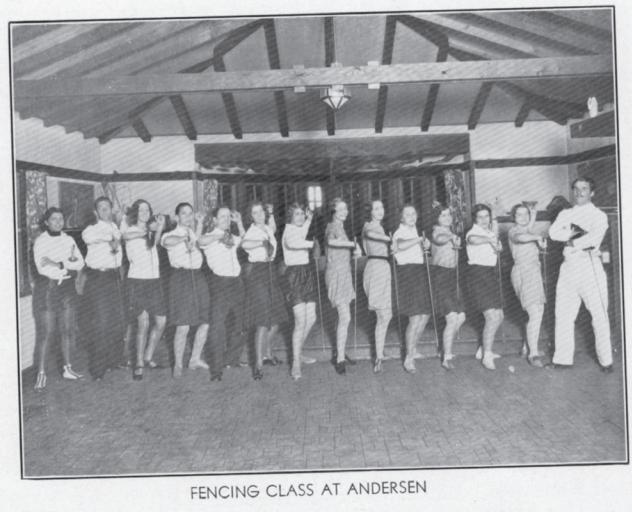
Historic Preservation

The Park District of Oak Park currently owns and maintains several historic landscapes, buildings and sites that are considered significant architecturally, historically and culturally to the Village of Oak Park. These architectural and historical resources are not only important Park District facilities but also “iconic” buildings and places that help define and contribute to the Village’s overall image and quality of life. Over the years, the Park District has taken the appropriate measures to preserve, rehabilitate and re-use these historic resources for current and future generations of Oak Park residents and visitors to the community.

Of the Park District’s facilities, there are three historic resources that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, this nation’s official list of buildings, structures and sites worthy of preservation. The National Register is a program of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and administered in Illinois by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). The buildings include the Oak Park Conservatory (constructed in 1929 and listed in 2005), and the Pleasant Home (constructed in 1897 and listed in 1972), originally known as the Farson-Mills House and designed by noted Prairie School architect George W. Maher. Scoville Park (originally Scoville Place, constructed in 1913), Oak Park’s first public park and designed by the landscape architect Jens Jensen, was listed in the National Register in 2002. According to the Village of Oak Park’s Historic Preservation Commission, Taylor Park, also designed by Jens Jensen, is considered potentially eligible for listing in the National Register but has not been nominated.

In addition to National Register listing, the Pleasant Home is also a designated National Historic Landmark. National Historic Landmarks are nationally-significant historic properties and places designated only by the Secretary of the Interior due to their exceptional value or quality in demonstrating and illustrating a certain aspect of the heritage of the United States. There are currently 86 National Historic Landmarks in Illinois. Designation as a National Historic Landmark or listing

in the National Register do not place restrictions on the use of property but provide a level of protection against federally-funded or licensed projects that may alter or significantly impact listed or designated buildings, structures, sites and objects. Designation also provides the opportunity for the Park District to apply for federal-level grants for bricks and mortar projects when funding is available. National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are also eligible to receive in-depth site inspections funded and coordinated by the National Park Service regional offices, with the nearest located in Denver, Colorado. The purpose of the inspection is to analyze a NHL’s condition, identify and prioritize recommended preservation treatments, and provide cost estimates for such treatments. A building condition assessment report may also be completed.



It should be noted that two other parks and facilities are included as part of the three National Register Historic Districts in Oak Park. Austin Gardens Park at Forest Place and Ontario Street is a contributing resource in the Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie School of Architecture National Register Historic District, which is bounded by Division Street to the north, Lake Street to south and Harlem and Ridgeland Avenues to the west and east respectively; and, Mills Park, part of the original Farson-Mills estate, is a contributing resource in the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District, which extends south from Lake Street and South

Boulevard to Washington Boulevard and from Harlem to Ridgeland Avenues from west to east. Contributing resources are buildings, sites, structures and objects that add or “contribute” to the architectural, historical and other design qualities of a particular National Register Historic District. The Randolph Park at the southwest corner of Randolph Street and Oak Park Avenue is located within the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District; this park facility is a non-contributing resource due to its most recent renovation in 2010.

The three National Register Historic Districts are also designated Village of Oak Park Historic Districts by municipal ordinance, which mandates design review for proposed plans that may alter the exterior appearance of contributing buildings to the Historic District by the Village’s Historic Preservation Commission. The Oak Park Conservatory and the Pleasant Home are also designated as Village of Oak Park Landmarks. While routine maintenance projects and exterior changes that are not visible in the public right-of-way only receive an advisory review by the Commission, projects that propose partial or full demolition of a contributing resource must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Commission, with which owners of historic properties must comply. Therefore, design review for contributing historic resources located in Park District parks, whether they be buildings, sites, structures or objects and located in Village of Oak Park Historic Districts is required for any proposed projects that may alter or demolish such resources.

Going forward, the Park District of Oak Park should continue to be good stewards of its historic buildings, sites and landscapes that make up part of its facilities. Such facilities are important legacies of Oak Park’s heritage and serve to inform the community on the important people, architects and landscape architects that helped shape the community’s architectural icons and public spaces. While it is recognized that maintaining historic park facilities can be challenging,

the Park District may need to continue underwriting operations and maintenance costs while exploring additional partnership opportunities, such as Pleasant Home Foundation’s co-stewardship partnership for example, which can help generate additional revenues for rehabilitating buildings and landscapes. Additionally, the Park District should pursue funding and grant opportunities when they become available and consult with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency and the National Park Service.

The Park District could also participate in or partially fund professional consultation and training services that can help potential partners and organizations build their capacity to help manage historic buildings and facilities. Consultation and training services could focus on topics ranging from organizational assessments, strategic planning, board development and fundraising. The Park District could partially fund such consultation with possible matching grants from local foundations and corporations.



**Oak Park
Recreational Facility and Service Providers**

Recreation Provider	Adults Sports Programs	After School Programs	Art Programs	Athletic Fields	Birthday Parties	Camps	Fitness Programs and/or Equipment	Gymnastics	Gymnasiums	Ice Skating/Hockey	Indoor Playground	Indoor Pool	Indoor Tennis Courts	Matial Arts Programs	Museum	Outdoor Pool	Outdoor Tennis Courts	Parks	Performing Arts (Dance, Music, Theatre, etc.) Programs	Playgrounds	Preschool Programs	Skills Clinics/Classes	Swim Lessons	Swim Team	Teen Programs	Walking Paths/Track	Youth Sports Programs
The Mama Tribe						x																					
Master S.H. Yu Martial Arts													x														
Mid-Town Athletic Club						x						x															
Oak Park Education Foundation					x																						
Oak Park Tennis & Fitness Centre						x						x															
Orangetheory Fitness						x																					
Peek A Boo Playroom										x																	
Pilgrim Community Nursery																				x							
School of Rock				x	x													x									
Wonder Works Children's Museum				x						x				x													
Yoga Trek Center						x																					
Other Private Studios		x		x	x	x							x				x		x	x				x			

updated December 15, 2014